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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL, 1936

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
OFFICE OF DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL,
Washington, D. C., September 30, 1936.

HON. HENRY A. WALLACE,
Secretary of Agriculture.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: Herewith I submit a report of the work in the Office of Personnel for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1936.

Sincerely yours,

W. W. STOCKBERGER, *Director.*

INTRODUCTION

The ultimate objective of personnel administration is the maximum utilization of our human resources. Progress toward this end is conditioned by our knowledge of the nature and characteristics of these resources, and by our ability to devise and apply adequate methods for their development. A major function of the Office of Personnel, therefore, is to sponsor and promote every legitimate measure which will contribute to the efficiency, morale, and general welfare of our employees, and to effectuate a reciprocal and sympathetic appreciation, by supervisory officials and the rank and file, of their respective points of view.

That personnel administration is a definite part of supervision, whatever its degree, is not always clearly recognized. The central Office of Personnel formulates general personnel policies, coordinates personnel procedure in the several branches of the Department, and serves as a general clearing house on personnel matters, but the results depend upon the nature of the relationship established in that narrow zone of contact between supervisor and supervised. Personnel administration will be successful to the extent that line supervisors are made conversant with approved personnel procedures, and are held responsible for their understanding and use.

Experience indicates that the development of bureau personnel offices, with corresponding decentralization of personnel administration, promotes compliance with personnel policies and enforcement of proper personnel practices. In bureaus which have large field forces, organized into regional administrative units, it is advantageous to further decentralize personnel administration by the establishment of regional personnel offices, subordinate and responsible to the bureau office. Such offices are in a favorable position to maintain close contact with field supervisors, to advise them of their personnel responsibilities, and to aid them in the solution of the numerous personnel problems which grow out of the relationships between the employee and his supervisor.

CAREER TRAINING

The securing of new and acceptably qualified incumbents for vacant positions at the higher levels of responsibility is a problem of increasing difficulty. This indicates the desirability of a more critical examination of the educational background of future entrants into the service, and also points to the necessity for providing a systematic program of training through which active-minded employees could acquire a better understanding of the fundamental principles of management and also broaden their knowledge of the interrelations of departmental operations and functions. Career training should prove attractive to competent, younger employees if provision is made for security of tenure, reasonable compensation, and opportunity for promotion.

PREVENTIVE MEDICAL SERVICE

Elsewhere in this report it is shown that during the calendar year 1934 employees stationed in Washington were absent from duty on account of illness a total of 51,230 days. Assuming that the average annual salary of the employees concerned was only \$1,500, this represented a loss in services having a salary value of approximately \$245,000. There are good reasons for believing that the establishment of a preventive medical service would result in a substantial reduction in the number of workdays lost and an improvement in the general health of many employees now suffering, perhaps unconsciously, from remediable defects. For this purpose early provision should be made for the employment of a full-time medical officer and an adequate nursing staff.

APPOINTMENTS, SEPARATIONS, AND PROMOTIONS

The number of persons holding formal appointments in the Department was increased by 9,442 during the past fiscal year. On June 30, 1936, there were 53,522 persons under appointment as compared with 44,080 at the close of the fiscal year 1935. The Soil Conservation Service, having 1,853 employees on June 30, 1935, had increased its force to 5,635 by June 30, 1936, a net gain of 3,782, and in addition the Emergency Conservation Work employees of the Soil Conservation Service were given formal appointments during the year, and this force on June 30, 1936, included 4,824 employees, so practically all the gain in the personnel of the Department during the fiscal year occurred in these organizations.

The Agricultural Adjustment Administration, which had 6,136 employees on June 30, 1935, decreased its force to 5,493 by June 30, 1936, a loss of 643. Personnel data for the last 5 years are shown in table 1.

TABLE 1.—*Personnel activities of the Department of Agriculture, 1932-36*

Year ended June 30	Employees on rolls of Department			Field stations	Employees appointed	Separations from the Department
	Departmental service	Field service	Total			
1932-----	5,664	¹ 21,764	27,428	1,451	6,612	7,425
1933-----	5,521	² 21,023	26,544	1,451	3,915	4,721
1934-----	10,032	³ 28,591	38,623	1,451	⁴ 31,434	⁵ 19,355
1935-----	11,437	⁶ 32,643	44,080	1,864	⁷ 29,092	⁸ 23,635
1936-----	11,434	⁹ 42,140	53,522	1,864	¹⁰ 30,634	¹¹ 21,192

¹ Includes 78 in Foreign Service.

² Includes 80 in Foreign Service.

³ Includes 11,667 in Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

⁴ Includes 6,647 in Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

⁵ Includes 52 in Foreign Service.

⁶ Includes 8,249 in Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

⁷ Includes 7,456 in Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

⁸ Includes 52 in Foreign Service.

⁹ Includes 3,186 in Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

¹⁰ Includes 5,821 in Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

On June 30, 1936, there were 1,382 collaborators serving without compensation who are not included in table 1.

The turn-over of permanent employees during the fiscal year 1936 was 6.88 percent as compared with 7.19 percent during the fiscal year 1935, 10.63 percent during 1934, 3.88 percent during 1933, and 5.98 percent during 1932. The apparent decrease in the turn-over during the fiscal years 1935 and 1936 as compared to 1934 is accounted for by the fact that during the fiscal year 1934 employees appointed regularly from civil-service certificates for a probationary period for the duration of the work were counted as permanent in 1934, whereas during the years 1935 and 1936 they were classed as temporary or emergency employees.

The fiscal year 1936 is the first year since the passage of the Economy Act of June 30, 1932, in which administrative promotions or promotions within the grade, were possible. During this year there were 10,815 promotions, both within the grade and from grade to grade, compared with 3,764 during the fiscal year 1935, and 914 in the fiscal year 1934. Promotions during 1934 and 1935 were from grade to grade only.

During the year 413 formal applications for civil-service positions were received and circulated throughout the Department, as compared with 410 during 1935.

RECORD OF LEAVE

During the calendar year 1934 annual leave of 15 days was allowed for the full year, together with the leave accumulated from 1933. Statistics have been compiled for annual and sick leave for the calendar year 1934. The average annual leave taken by the men and women in Washington was 11.9 days, whereas the employees in the field took an average of 10.2 days.

As indicated in previous reports, the decrease in the amount of annual leave to 15 days did not materially affect the amount of sick leave taken by the employees of the Department. During the calendar year 1934 the average sick leave taken by employees in Washington was 7.5 days, an increase of 0.2 day over 1933, and the same as the average for the last 8 years. Table 2 shows the distribution of employees according to the number of days of annual or sick leave used, and the total number of days of leave in each classification. These figures contradict the frequently repeated statement that employees are accustomed to use their entire allowance of leave. Only 3.9 percent took the maximum amount of sick leave. There were 1,126 employees who used more than 15 of the allowable 30 days of sick leave. The total number of days of sick leave taken by this group was 26,489. Hence 16.5 percent of the employees used 51.7 percent of the total sick leave taken.

TABLE 2.—*Distribution of employees according to number of days of annual and sick leave used, calendar year 1935*

Annual leave			Sick leave		
Days taken (number)	Employees ¹	Total days taken	Days taken (number)	Employees ¹	Total days taken
	Number	Number		Number	Number
0.....	189	0	0.....	1,475	0
1.....	136	136	1.....	544	544
2.....	130	260	2.....	538	1,076
3.....	148	444	3.....	436	1,308
4.....	144	576	4.....	405	1,620
5.....	175	875	5.....	303	1,515
6.....	205	1,230	6.....	317	1,902
7.....	228	1,596	7.....	257	1,799
8.....	267	2,136	8.....	243	1,944
9.....	283	2,547	9.....	231	2,079
10.....	406	4,060	10.....	211	2,110
11.....	424	4,664	11.....	187	2,057
12.....	453	5,436	12.....	179	2,148
13.....	503	6,539	13.....	129	1,677
14.....	596	8,344	14.....	98	1,372
15.....	993	14,895	15.....	106	1,590
16.....	400	6,400	16.....	100	1,600
17.....	324	5,508	17.....	102	1,734
18.....	253	4,554	18.....	84	1,512
19.....	185	3,515	19.....	58	1,102
20.....	127	2,540	20.....	55	1,100
21.....	84	1,764	21.....	61	1,281
22.....	57	1,254	22.....	50	1,100
23.....	33	759	23.....	53	1,219
24.....	25	600	24.....	60	1,440
25.....	7	175	25.....	52	1,300
26.....	10	260	26.....	42	1,092
Total.....	6,785	81,067	27.....	40	1,080
			28.....	39	1,092
			29.....	63	1,827
			30.....	267	8,010
			Total.....	6,785	51,230

¹ Not including employees on temporary status who were not entitled to leave.

Average number of days annual leave, 11.9; average number of days of sick leave, 7.5.

In the field, where the limit of sick leave was 15 days, the average sick leave taken during the year 1934 was 2.6 days, as compared with 8-year average of 2.9 days. Ten percent of the employees in the field took 15,101 days of sick leave and 90 percent used only 14,160 days.

During the calendar year 1934, 21.7 percent of the employees in Washington did not take any sick leave. In the field, for the same year, only 5.3 percent took the maximum amount and 54 percent took none. The 8-year average of

employees taking the full amount of sick leave is 5.3 percent for Washington and 6.2 percent for the field, whereas 26 percent of the employees in Washington and 52 percent of the field force used no sick leave.

WORK INCIDENT TO APPOINTMENTS, TRANSFERS, AND PROMOTIONS

Changes affecting personnel in the Department required contacts with the Civil Service Commission, and authorizations affecting appointments, promotions, transfers, reinstatements, etc., were recorded as indicated in table 3.

TABLE 3.—*Personnel changes in the Department of Agriculture, 1932-36*

Item	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936
Certificates from register.....	702	74	1, 510	1, 648	1, 948
Reinstatement certificates.....	212	27	481	416	481
Certificates for change in status.....	194	108	234	910	1, 388
Transfer certificates.....	165	69	405	220	452
Authorities for temporary appointments.....	462	94	4, 848	740	771
Authorities for extensions of temporary appointments.....	443	66	4, 031	1, 466	1 270
Authorities for extensions of suspensions.....	6	6	3	2	3
Civil-service examinations requested.....	26	7	29	110	124

¹ The material reduction in this item under previous years may be accounted for by the fact that the various bureaus and offices of the Department have been filling more or less temporary vacancies by probationary, for duration of work, appointments in which cases no extensions of temporary appointments are involved.

RETIREMENT RECORDS

Our records show that 154 employees were retired in accordance with the provisions of the Retirement Act during the fiscal year 1936. Figures showing the retirements for the last 5 years are given in table 4, and the average annuities paid in the various groups are shown in table 5.

TABLE 4.—*Number of employees retired, 1932-36*

Year ended June 30	Annuity retirements in class				Disability retirements in class				Cases disposed of
	Professional	Subprofessional	Clerical, administrative, and fiscal	Custodial	Professional	Subprofessional	Clerical, administrative, and fiscal	Custodial	
1932.....	22	41	13	9	8	17	8	10	128
1933.....	81	132	22	28	9	23	19	15	329
1934.....	51	63	58	24	12	12	28	11	259
1935.....	46	65	24	12	10	14	29	5	205
1936.....	29	50	18	6	11	19	18	3	154

TABLE 5.—*Averages of the annuities in the various groups, 1932-36*

Group	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936
Professional and scientific.....	\$1, 100. 77	\$1, 114. 04	\$1, 102. 22	\$1, 039. 81	\$1, 068. 59
Subprofessional.....	972. 67	1, 012. 91	946. 81	960. 08	990. 43
Clerical, administrative, and fiscal.....	981. 88	963. 67	946. 83	826. 35	865. 08
Custodial.....	698. 57	695. 98	757. 72	728. 50	654. 05

The average age of employees retired on account of disability was 53.7 years, and the minimum annuity granted was \$200.04. The largest annuity granted on retirement because of age was \$1,445.88. This was the increased annuity with forfeiture. Had the employee elected a life annuity the amount annually received would have been \$1,269.48. Of the 154 employees granted annuities, only 48

had 30 or more years of service. Of the 48, 35 were retired on account of age, 10 for disability, and 3, reduction of force. Only seven employees availed themselves of the optional-retirement clause.

The following continuances in the service beyond retirement age were granted: A principal highway engineer and an associate economic geologist in the Bureau of Public Roads; a senior pathologist and a principal botanist in the Bureau of Plant Industry; and a principal soil scientist in the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils.

In addition to the above, the retirement section forwarded to the Civil Service Commission 709 applications for refund of retirement deductions, and 4,328 of the Civil Service Commission Master Retirement Record Cards No. 2806 for employees who resigned, transferred to other establishments, or separated for other reasons.

There were 221 employees who obtained credit for past temporary or excepted service as provided for under section 9 of the act of May 29, 1930, and redeposited the amounts previously refunded.

The quinquennial valuation report for the Civil Service Commission shows the total civil-service retirement and disability fund deductions remaining to the credit of employees of this Department on June 30, 1935, to be \$11,402,599.34.

INVESTIGATIONS

One of the outstanding achievements during the past year was the inauguration of periodical detailed inspections of field stations and offices of the Department. The purpose of such inspections is twofold; namely, to discover existing cases of fiscal irregularities, inefficiency, and mismanagement, and to prevent similar cases in the future. It is believed that these inspections will result in material savings to the Department by eliminating or greatly reducing inefficiency, mismanagement, and waste. In the conduct of the inspections every phase of the business operations is checked, special attention being given to pay-roll and purchase vouchers. In fact, all receipts and disbursements are checked, as are property and other necessary control records. Vendors' records are also checked against purchase orders and vouchers.

During the year detailed inspections were made at 24 field stations. The small number of such inspections may be attributed to limited personnel; to the fact that a number of stations had been in operation for many years without previous inspection and audit, which made it essential for the investigators to remain at such stations for a longer period of time than would otherwise have been necessary to complete their work; and to the necessity for taking investigators off this type of work for the purpose of having them conduct important special investigations. Furthermore in many instances the investigators were hampered in their work by the lack of adequate records. In such cases recommendations were made with respect to the types of records which should be maintained in the future.

The results of the detailed inspections made during the past year amply demonstrated the need for continuing and expanding this type of work. Many fiscal irregularities, some of a serious nature, were discovered and stopped. Some cases of inefficiency, maladministration, and violation of Department regulations were discovered. Appropriate disciplinary action was taken in all cases, and reports were submitted to the Comptroller General when this was warranted by the facts. Some of the cases were of such a serious nature that they were reported also to the Attorney General for appropriate action.

In numerous cases the investigators were of service to field officials by giving them accurate and helpful information and advice with respect to their problems, and this type of assistance will form an important part of the investigators' duties in the future.

In addition to the detailed inspections of field stations and offices, 130 special investigations were conducted during the past fiscal year, most of which were personnel cases, and several alleged violations of regulatory laws administered by the Department were investigated. During the past year several hundred personnel recommendations submitted by the various bureaus were reviewed, a large proportion of which were for the imposition of disciplinary penalties. In reviewing these recommendations consistent effort has been made to see that like penalties were imposed for like offenses.

Many other services have been rendered including conferring with and advising bureau officials with respect to personnel problems and giving helpful advice to employees who felt that they had received unjust treatment.

CLASSIFICATION OF POSITIONS

During the fiscal year the classification staff operating under the Classification Act of 1923, as amended, has intensified its review of new positions and duty changes resulting from reorganization in the Washington service; has revised numerous obsolete descriptions of work; has reviewed and effected a greatly increased number of tentative classifications of the field positions; has conducted studies on organization and brought up to date the organization charts of the various bureaus and offices of the Department; has extended its activities by a personal inspection of the duties performed in some of the more important field stations; and has rendered more direct and constant service and advice to bureau officials in their classification and organization problems.

A total of 7,793 appointments and changes in status of Washington employees were acted upon during the past year. This number does not reflect the many cases reviewed and returned without action. It does, however, show all cases of change in duties and appeal, each of which involves a careful job analysis and recommendation. The number of individual appeals did not increase as it has been possible to give more attention to the individual and group needs than during the past few years.

A summary of this activity, insofar as it relates to the personnel in Washington for the past year, is given in table 6.

TABLE 6.—*Appointments and changes in status of employees of the Department of Agriculture, 1932-36*

Year ended June 30	Appoint-ments to new posi-tions	Changes in duties	Changes to vacancies	Appeals	Total
1932.....	187	320	725	23	1,255
1933.....	246	143	104	5	498
1934.....	5,561	1,274	2,329	15	9,179
1935.....	1,634	3,315	3,260	45	8,254
1936.....	1,905	3,698	2,145	45	7,793

In addition to those shown in table 6, a greatly increased number of positions have been reviewed from the field service and tentative classifications assigned in accordance with departmental standards. The volume of such transactions increased greatly with the continuation of the emergency funds, the extensive reorganization of the Forest Service and the expansion of the Soil Conservation Service.

The number of individual and office surveys on work assignments has increased and more comprehensive cross-section job-analysis studies have been made possible in the past year. This has aided proposed organization and allocation changes and has helped to settle numerous grade and salary problems, smoothed out personnel difficulties and effected efficiency in management, as well as economy in financial savings to the Department. The continuation of emergency allotments with the subsequent employment of large numbers in the field service, as well as the normal reorganization of the various bureaus, requires accurate information on all work problems, their relation to the units concerned and the coordination of individual duties to the standardized plan of uniform compensation grades for like services rendered. In addition to this work the division has aided in the establishment of fair and adequate regional wage scales for certain unclassified field positions.

The inspection of field positions, although restricted because of limited personnel, has been made in representative offices of the Forest Service, Soil Conservation Service and in certain departmental offices in New York City and Baltimore. In each case important classification information was secured and grade and salary discrepancies adjusted. The results of such inspections show that they aid in improving the morale of the employees, assist the field officers in their problems of personnel adjustment, avoid duplications in employee assignment and result in consequent savings to the service.

Constant advice also is rendered to bureau officials on questions of classification procedure, levels of duty assignment, division of employee responsibility, job levels and wage scales, and related problems of organization. These services create a better understanding of the problems of classification and aid the Department in maintaining fair and uniform standards of work and pay throughout its numerous agencies.

EMPLOYEE ACTIVITIES

The Office of Personnel has continued sponsorship of the numerous employee activities which may be grouped as follows: Educational, welfare, and social and recreational. On March 27, 1936, the Welfare Association published a pamphlet of 21 pages in which the various employee activities of the Department were described in detail. So far as possible a copy of this pamphlet has been placed in the hands of each new employee who has entered the service in Washington since the date of publication.

These activities have exerted a very wholesome influence upon the morale of employees, and have developed a more democratic spirit in their relationships. They have also made of the Department a pleasanter place in which to live and work:

